



Massachusetts Department of Public Health

GUIDE TO HOSTING A COMMUNITY FORUM ON THE COVID-19 VACCINE

Updated February 15, 2021

Instructions for using this guide

- This guide is designed for providers, community groups, and others to host local meetings or forums about the COVID-19 vaccine, with the goal of increasing vaccine confidence.
- It includes information from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) in response to commonly asked questions and encourages discussion and feedback.
- There are additional talking points in the notes section of each slide.
- You may use some or all of this content based on your community's interests and needs.
 - Additional information to inform your forum can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine-in-massachusetts>
- The guide will be updated based on new information about the COVID-19 vaccine and feedback from its users.
- Please remove this slide from the deck before your forum.

How to request an MDPH ambassador

- You may request an MDPH COVID-19 vaccine ambassador to attend your community forum. Ambassadors are not necessarily vaccine experts or clinicians but are public health professionals with experience in community settings.
- Ambassadors can speak, answer questions, and/or listen to your feedback to share with MDPH.
- If you are interested in inviting an MDPH ambassador to your forum, please email miguel.arrechea@mass.gov with the following information:
 - Date, time, and audience of the forum
 - Desired role for the ambassador
 - Language capacity or other important considerations
- If possible, please request an ambassador at least two weeks before your forum.
- MDPH will make every effort to fulfill requests.
- Please remove this slide from the deck before your forum.

How to share feedback with MDPH

- Email Miguel at miguel.arrechea@mass.gov if you:
 - Use the discussion questions at the end of this slide deck and would like to share responses with MDPH. Your responses will be used to inform MDPH's ongoing communications and planning work.
 - Have feedback on or suggestions to improve this guide.
- Email COVID-19-Vaccine-Plan-MA@mass.gov for all other questions related to COVID-19 vaccine.
- Please remove this slide from the deck before your forum.

Acknowledging structural racism and oppression

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health recognizes that historical and current [structural racism](#) and oppression has made it difficult for some communities (such as Black people and people with disabilities) to fully trust the public health, medical and scientific community. We want to be open and honest about the safety and development of the COVID-19 vaccine—what we know and what we don't know.

This guide provides a foundation to have these conversations but does not address all the unique and valid needs and concerns of different populations and communities. We encourage you to tailor the language and format in a way that is most relevant and resonant for the people with whom you work.

What is a vaccine and how does it work?

- Vaccines prevent diseases that can be dangerous, or even deadly. They work with your body's natural defenses to safely develop protection from a disease.
- A vaccine helps your immune system to produce antibodies, just like it would if you were exposed to the disease. After getting vaccinated, you have protection from that disease, without having to get the disease first.
- This is what makes vaccines such powerful medicine. Unlike most medicines, which treat or cure diseases, vaccines *prevent* them.

What are the benefits of getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

- COVID-19 vaccination will help keep you from getting sick from COVID-19.
- All COVID-19 vaccines available in the U.S. have been shown to be very effective.
- Wearing masks and social distancing help lower your chance of getting the virus or spreading it to others, but these measures are not enough.
- The combination of getting vaccinated and following CDC's recommendations to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19.
- The more people who get vaccinated, the faster we can get back to our normal lives.



What vaccines are available?

- Two vaccines have received Emergency Use Authorization from the Food and Drug Administration from companies named Pfizer and Moderna.
- Both vaccines are 95% effective at protecting people from getting sick from COVID-19.
- The Pfizer vaccine requires 2 doses given at least 21 days apart.
- The Moderna vaccine requires 2 doses given at least 28 days apart.
- These vaccines were not studied for use as a single dose. People should get both doses to be fully vaccinated in order to be effective.



How do we know if the vaccine is safe?

Vaccines go through more testing than any other pharmaceuticals.

1. First, small groups of people receive the trial vaccine.
2. Next, vaccine is given to specific groups of people (for example, people of a certain age, race, and physical health).
3. Then it is given to tens of thousands of people and tested for effectiveness and safety.
4. After that, the CDC's [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices](#) looks at the data to see whether the vaccine works and is safe. They give advice to the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
5. The FDA looks at the data and the advice from the Advisory Committee and decides whether to approve the vaccine.

The vaccine is only approved after **all of these steps** are done, and the experts are sure that it works and is safe.

How is it safe if it happened so fast?

The timeline was sped up but never cut corners on safety. Here is how:

- **We already had helpful information** about coronaviruses, so we weren't starting from scratch.
- The United States and other governments **invested a lot of money** to support vaccine companies with their work.
- A lot of people participated in clinical trials and **we didn't need to spend time finding volunteers.**
- Manufacturing happened **at the same time as safety studies**, so vaccines were ready to be distributed once they were approved.

Can I get COVID-19 from the COVID-19 vaccines?

No. The vaccines do not contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that you can't catch COVID-19 from the vaccine.

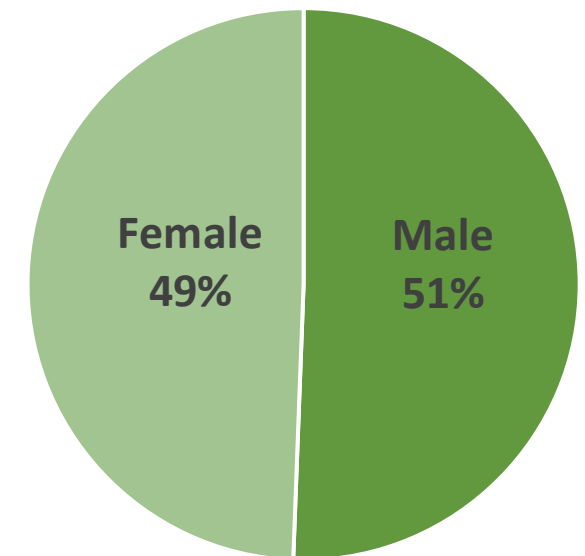
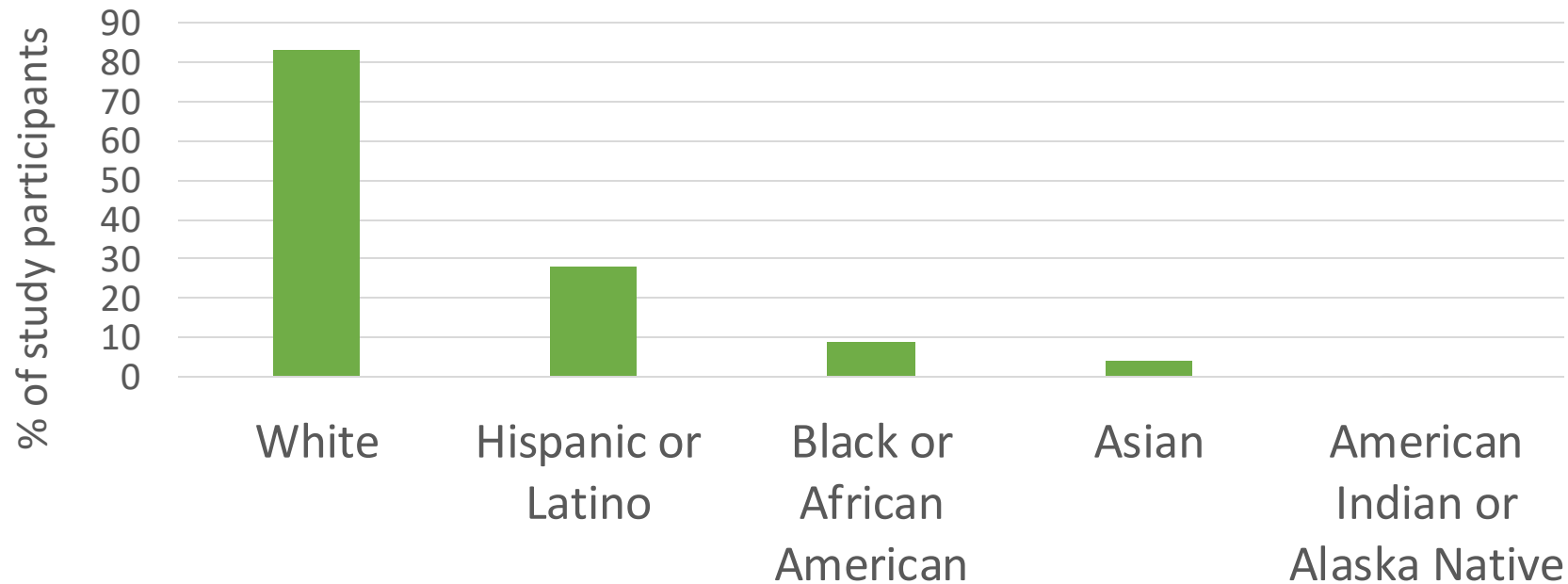


Do the COVID-19 vaccines have any side effects?

- Serious side effects from vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccine, are rare.
- It is possible that some people may have side effects, which are normal signs that your body is building protection.
- These side effects may affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days.
- The most common side effects are minor and include:
 - Tiredness
 - Headache
 - Pain at the injection site
 - Muscle and/or joint pain
 - Chills
 - Nausea and/or vomiting
 - Fever

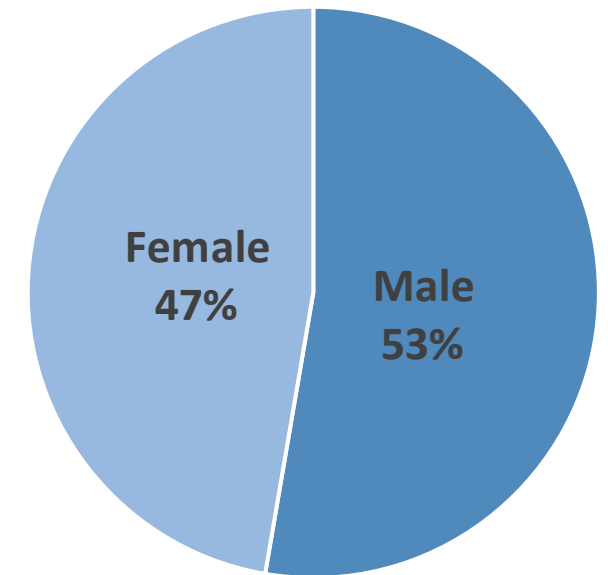
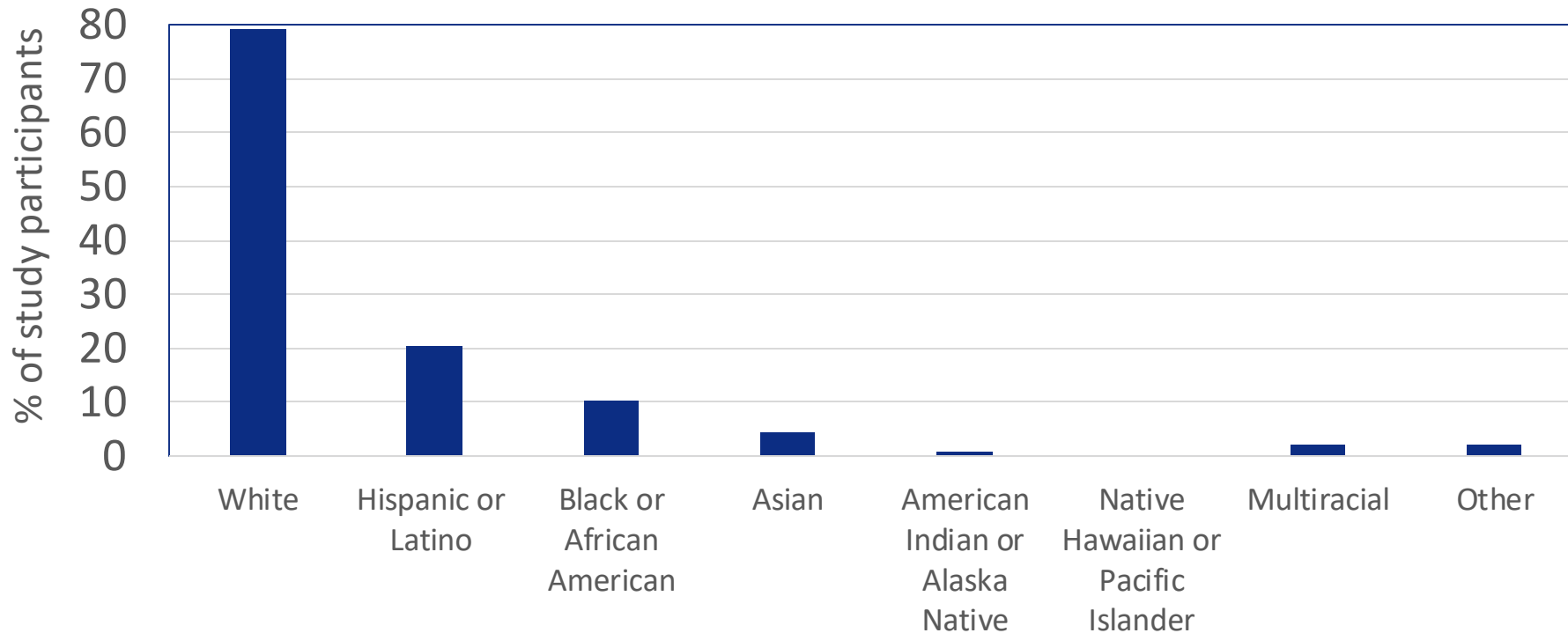
Who were the vaccines tested on?

The safety of the **Pfizer vaccine** was evaluated in 43,448 people 16 years of age and older in two clinical studies conducted in the United States, Europe, Turkey, South Africa, and South America. See below for the makeup of **Pfizer** study participants by race/ethnicity and gender.



Who were the vaccines tested on?

The safety of the **Moderna vaccine** was evaluated in 30,351 people 18 years of age and older in the United States. See below for the makeup of **Moderna** study participants by race/ethnicity and gender.



Who has received the vaccine so far?

- The Massachusetts Department of Public Health posts online a weekly vaccination report that shows information such as:
 - Number of doses of vaccine shipped to Massachusetts
 - Number of people who have been vaccinated;
 - Number of people who have been vaccinated **by county**
 - Number of people who have been vaccinated by **age and race/ethnicity**
 - Vaccines given by different types of providers (e.g. school, community health center)
- The latest numbers can be found at [COVID-19 Vaccination Program | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccination-program)

Distribution Timeline

When can I get a **COVID-19** vaccine in MA?



PHASE ONE

In order of priority

- Clinical and non-clinical healthcare workers doing direct and COVID-facing care
- Long term care facilities, rest homes and assisted living facilities
- First responders (EMS, Fire, Police)
- Congregate care settings (including corrections and shelters)
- Home-based healthcare workers
- Healthcare workers doing non-COVID-facing care



PHASE TWO

In order of priority

- Individuals 75+
- Individuals 65+, Individuals with 2+ comorbidities (those that are at increased risk for severe illness)
- Early education and K-12 workers, transit, grocery, utility, food and agriculture, sanitation, public works and public health workers
- Individuals with one comorbidity



PHASE THREE

Vaccine available to general public

December - February

Estimated timeframes

February - April

April - June

Updated 1/25/2021

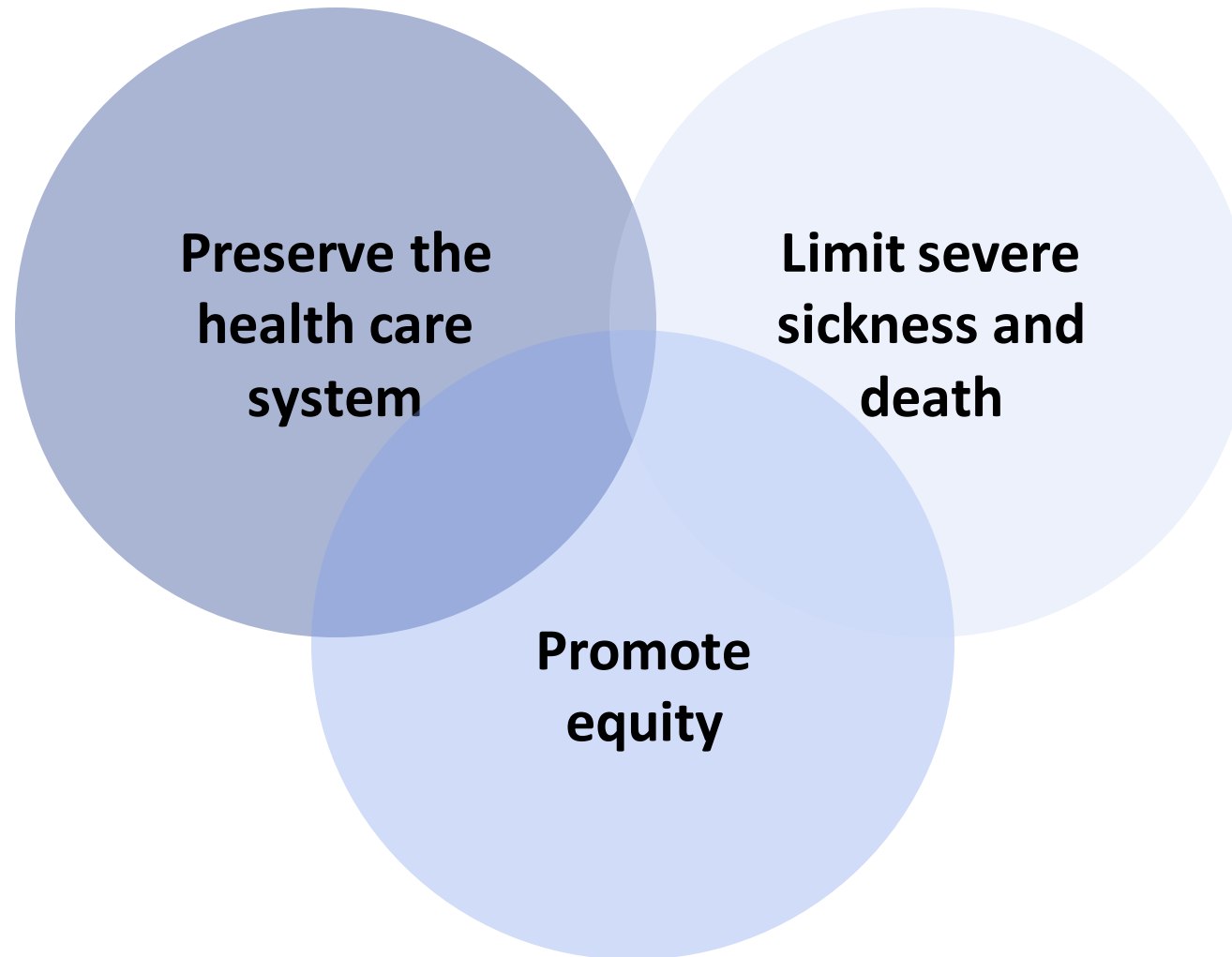
Who decided who gets the vaccine?

The state put together a [Vaccine Advisory Group](#) – leaders from healthcare, community organizing, local government, and others. They reviewed recommendations from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) and CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

- Dr. Paul Biddinger, Chair - Mass General Brigham
- State Senator Cindy Friedman - Chairperson of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
- State Representative Ronald Mariano – House Majority Leader
- Mayor Daniel Rivera - City of Lawrence
- Dr. Vincent Chiang - Boston Children's Hospital
- Dr. Robert Finberg - University of Massachusetts Medical School
- Dr. Simone Wildes - South Shore Hospital
- Dr. Sharon Wright - Beth Israel Lahey Health

- Dr. Asif Merchant - Mass Medical Society
- Dr. Barry Bloom - Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
- Dr. Marc Lipsitch - Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
- Dr. John Rocchio - CVS Health
- Dr. David Twitchell - Boston Medical Center
- Michael Curry, Esq. - Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers
- Rev. Liz Walker - Roxbury Presbyterian Church
- Wanda McClain - Brigham and Women's Hospital
- Phoebe Walker - Franklin Regional Council of Governments

How were those decisions made?



When can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

- Vaccine will be given out in three phases.
- Visit www.mass.gov/CovidVaccinePhases to learn:
 - Where you will fit into the COVID-19 vaccine distribution timeline
 - If you are eligible yet
 - Where eligible groups can be vaccinated



How will I know that it is my turn to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

- Most people will receive the vaccine in Phase 3.
- As the state moves through the prioritization phases, information on where, when and how to get the vaccine will be announced publicly and posted at www.mass.gov/CovidVaccinePhases
- You may get vaccinated by your employer, primary care provider, pharmacy, or public clinic.
- MDPH is not scheduling appointments directly.



Will I have to pay for the vaccine?

- No. The vaccine is **free** for all Massachusetts residents.
 - You will never be asked for a credit card number to make an appointment.
 - You can get a vaccine even if you do not have insurance, a driver's license, or a Social Security number.

Will getting the vaccine impact a person's immigration status?

- No. Getting the vaccine will not change whether you are able to stay in the US, get a green card, or get public benefits like housing or SNAP.
- **No matter what your immigration status**, it is important for you and your family to be safe from COVID-19.
- You can get a vaccine even if you do not have insurance, a driver's license, or a Social Security number.

What should I do if I experience symptoms after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine?

- If you have a lot of pain or discomfort, talk to your healthcare provider.
- If you do not have a healthcare provider or want to report any side effects to the CDC, visit **cdc.gov/vsafe**
- You can use v-safe on a smartphone to quickly tell CDC if you have any side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine and to get personalized health check-ins after you receive a COVID-19 vaccination.



Should someone with allergies get the COVID-19 vaccine?

- You should **not** get the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines if you have a history of severe allergic reaction (also called “anaphylaxis”) to any ingredient in the vaccine.
- The vaccines do not contain eggs, preservatives, or latex. The ingredient lists can be found at:
 - Pfizer: <https://www.fda.gov/media/144414/download> (page 2)
 - Moderna: <https://www.fda.gov/media/144638/download> (page 2)
- If you have a history of a severe allergic reaction to something else that’s not in the vaccine (like peanut butter), discuss with your health care provider before receiving the vaccine.

I would like to have a baby one day. Is it safe for me to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

- Yes. People who are trying to become pregnant now or who plan to try in the future may receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available to them.
- Based on what we know right now, experts believe that COVID-19 vaccines are safe for someone who is trying to become pregnant in the short or long term.
- There is no evidence that fertility problems are a side effect of any vaccine.

Should someone who is pregnant or breastfeeding get a COVID-19 vaccine?

- Getting vaccinated is a personal choice for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding. A discussion with your healthcare provider might help you make an informed decision.
- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that COVID-19 vaccines be offered to pregnant and breastfeeding individuals when they are eligible.
- Right now, we don't have data about whether the COVID-19 vaccines are safe in people who are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- We do know that getting sick with COVID-19 during pregnancy can increase the risk of severe illness and might increase the risk of outcomes like preterm birth.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe for children?

- The Pfizer vaccine is authorized for people ages 16 and older.
- The Moderna vaccine is authorized for people ages 18 and older.
- Younger children and adolescents should not receive COVID-19 vaccination right now.

Will a COVID-19 vaccine change my DNA?

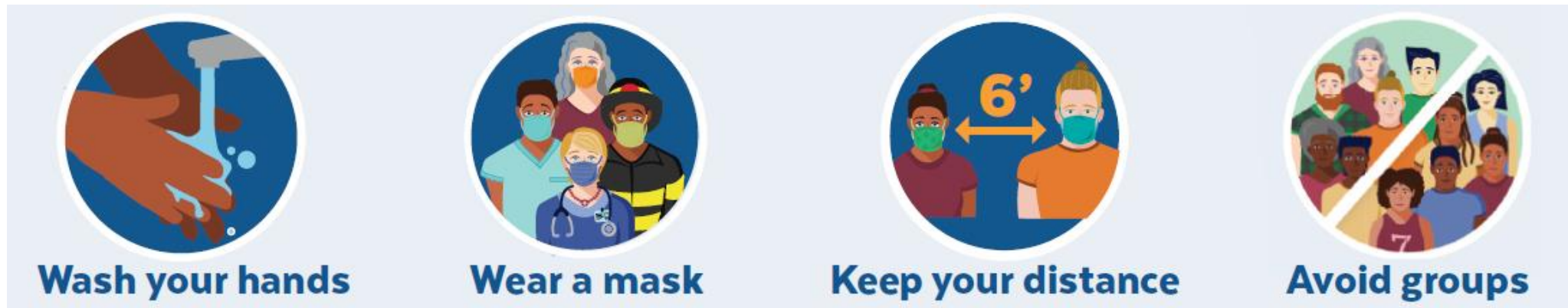
- No. COVID-19 mRNA vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way.
- Messenger RNA vaccines—also called mRNA vaccines—are the first COVID-19 vaccines approved in the United States. They teach our immune system how to fight against a specific virus.
- In order to do its job, the mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine doesn't need to go inside the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is kept. This means the mRNA never interacts with our DNA in any way and has no way to change it.

How long after getting the COVID-19 vaccine does it take to be effective? How long does it last?

- It usually takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination.
- That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.
- We do not know yet how long the COVID-19 vaccines will provide protection from getting sick even if you do get COVID-19.
- Experts continue to conduct more studies about whether the vaccines also keep people from spreading COVID-19.

Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received two doses of the vaccine?

- Yes. Experts continue to learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions.
- Until then it will be important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to us to help stop this pandemic, like:
 - Covering your mouth and nose with a mask
 - Washing hands often
 - Staying at least 6 feet away from others.



Who can help me make decisions about getting the vaccine?

If you have more questions about your own health or about deciding to get the vaccine, talk to a trusted healthcare provider, like your doctor, nurse, insurance care manager, pharmacist, or community health worker.



Discussion questions

- What concerns do **you** have regarding the COVID vaccine?
 - What concerns do **people in your community** have regarding the COVID vaccine?
- What information would help **you** trust the vaccine?
 - What information would help **people in your community** trust the vaccine?
- What would make **you** more likely to get the vaccine?
 - What would make **people in your community** more likely to get the vaccine?
- What barriers make it harder for **you** to get the COVID vaccine (for example, location, time off from work, needing two doses)?
 - What are the things that might make it harder for **people in your community** to get the COVID vaccine?
- How can we make it easier for **you** to get the vaccine?
 - How can we make it easier for **people in your community** to get the vaccine?

Where to learn more

Latest Massachusetts COVID-19 Vaccination Plan update
[COVID-19 Vaccination Program | Mass.gov](#)

When can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?
[Massachusetts' COVID-19 vaccination phases | Mass.gov](#)

FAQs for the general public
[COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions | Mass.gov](#)

COVID-19 Vaccine information from CDC
[COVID-19 Vaccines | CDC](#)

For other questions related to COVID-19 vaccine in Massachusetts, please email:
COVID-19-Vaccine-Plan-MA@mass.gov

Additional resources for forum organizers

Examples of other questions in the FAQ for the general public

[COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions | Mass.gov](#)

- Should someone who is COVID-19-positive receive the vaccine?
- Should people who have had COVID-19 be vaccinated?
- How will vaccines work against new COVID-19 variants, like the one that appeared in the United Kingdom?
- What can I expect at my appointment to get vaccinated for COVID-19?
- Can I choose which vaccine I receive?
- Do I have to follow the Travel Order if I have received a COVID-19 vaccine?
- What co-morbidities will be prioritized during Phase 2 of the state's COVID-19 Vaccine Plan?
- Will people who live in another state or country part time (e.g. students, retirees, people with dual citizenship) be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine in Massachusetts?

Tools and resources

Flyers and social media graphics in multiple languages

[Stop COVID-19 – Vaccine graphics | Mass.gov](#)

Trust the Facts, Get the Vax Campaign Materials, **including videos**

[Trust the Facts, Get the Vax Campaign Materials | Mass.gov](#)

COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Toolkit for **Community-Based Organizations**

[COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Toolkit for Community-Based Organizations: Getting Started | CDC](#)

COVID-19 Vaccination Communication Toolkit for **Medical Centers, Clinics, and Clinicians**

[COVID-19 Vaccination Communication Toolkit for Health Systems and Clinics | CDC](#)